Ayala
Reis
Duursema
Redmond

NEW MUTANTS

Vol. 3

MARVEL

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NEW MUTANTS

Vol. 3

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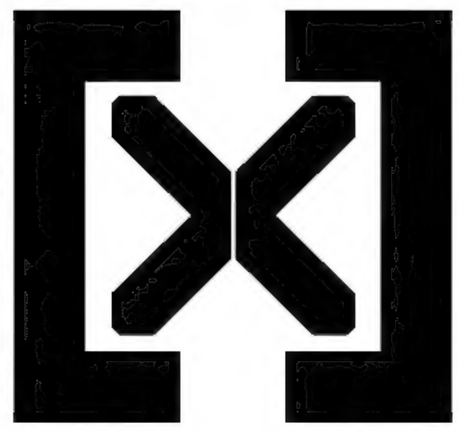
NEW MUTANTS NEW MUTANTS NEW MUTANTS



“Last, ah, woe is me! I have dared this labor, to crown the sorrows of my house ...
For mine is no curse that invites greetings.”

--*Heracles,* Euripides

Limbo.

"This seems too easy."

She's too strong for this to work.

I'd thank you to remember that, of the two of us, *I* know our quarry better than *you*.

Whatever you say, *Master*.

BLUBB BLUBB BLUBB

SPLORT

Smells like death...

And you're *sure* this ain't gonna just *end* me?

Dull, brutish *S'ym*.

If I wished to annihilate you, I could do it with the flick of my wrist.

You know the deal, and you know the stakes.

Drink and manifest your *full potential.*

GULP!

Wh-what's *happening* to me?!

Nrrghh...

Oh come now, it isn't that bad.

M-make it *stop!*

Here it comes...

Nrrrraaaaargh!!!

Sshh, sshh, you're all right, you're just fine.

There now, all done.

Nothing comes into existence without at least *some* blood and pain.

You know what you have to do.

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NEW MUTANTS

THE LABORS OF MAGIK

Weary of pulling triple duty as queen of Limbo, leader of the New Mutants and War Captain, Magik brought Madelyne Pryor to Limbo to offer her the throne -- ignoring the protests of her friends, who mistrust the Goblin Queen's intentions. But before the deal could be sealed, the demon S'ym -- newly empowered by an unknown entity -- attacked the group with his minions. And during the battle, Magik's Soulsword shattered! Her power over Limbo now gone, Magik and co. must figure out how to stop S'ym and escape from Limbo before all-out war breaks loose.

[MAGIK]

[DANI MOONSTAR]

[S'YM]

[MADELYNE PRYOR]

[WOLFSBANE]

[COLOSSUS]

[00_new_mutants]
[00_limbo__X]

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Best Laid Plans...

11

Once upon a time, there was a Little Goblin. When the Little Goblin was very young, she became lost in the woods and couldn't find her way home. She spent so much time wandering in the forest that she forgot what home even looked like.

All the while, she was chased by a large, frightening shadow. No matter how fast or far she ran, the shadow kept pace, whispering terrible things in her ear.

After a long while, the Little Goblin realized that to escape, she would need help...

The Reach, Krakoa.

You're thinking too loud.

We won't take it easy on you!

For the love of--

=Grunt=

You're making a mistake, 'Yana.

So you've said.

INHACK!

I can't believe after all we've been through, you don't trust me.

POW

It's not that--

It's just--

NO.

Whoa!

If you'd just listen!!!

This isn't just about you, this affects everyone.

WOOSH

You're a *War Captain*, for goodness' sake!

And *as* a War Captain--

--my judgment has been vetted by the council.

Argh!

WHAP!

Hrk!

If you're so twitchy about it, come along and watch.

If something goes sideways, you have my blessing to pull the plug. But you have to give me a chance.

Ahem.

Problem?

I think *concern* is a better way to put it.

Deep concern.

I'm listening.

They're just *cranky.*

They don't like that I'm going to make you *Queen of Hell.*

Through her trials and tribulations, the Little Goblin came to know **others** who would fight against the darkness in the world--others who were Strange, like her.

In the Little Goblin's quest to free herself, three Companions made themselves known:

The Wolf, a compassionate spiritual warrior with a pure heart; **the Queen of Echoes**, a powerful sorceress touched by madness; and **the Moon Whisperer**, a huntress and fierce protector of the innocent.

These three saw the truth of the Little Goblin, and agreed to stand at her side.

Limbo.

Things look... *different.*

Less *twisted* than *your* tastes?

None of that.

RUSTLE RUSTLE

Madelyne can redecorate all she wants when this place is hers again. And when she does...

...maybe *little demons* will stop *rifling through* their majesty's stuff!

RUSTLE RUSTLE

Where is, where is?!

Ahem!

You understand that I can have you tortured for eternity for your audacity?

Helping you!

You see, you *see!*

I am going to--

Keep to the matter at hand?

That is a demon, Dani. Demons are creatures of pure evil and chaos.

And completely under *your* power.

For now.

That does not mean they are not scheming.

But you are right. We have *business* elsewhere.

Welcome to the totality of *arcane lore,* as collected by *Belasco.*

This is--

--unbelievable.

Hm. Not bad.

The books, are they all...*you know?*

Demonic? No, there is considerable neutral and even benevolent knowledge here.

Even a few books written by saints.

The objective of the library was to amass *all* magical knowledge.

As this is all soon to be yours, would you mind assisting in setting up the ritual space?

...Why are you *talking* that way?

This place always reminds me of being a child.

Everything, from how I spoke to how I sat and breathed, it was all *controlled.* Formal.

I spent *years* in this room, trying to find a way to escape Belasco.

But I knew that he watched, even here.

CLICK

It's easy to fall back into old habits in Limbo.

That's part of why I need to be done with this place.

Considering my track record with Limbo, it is *curious* that you came to me to help you.

The last time I was in power here, I didn't exactly use my influence for good.

Not that I'm trying to talk you out of it, but what makes you so sure your *friends* aren't right?

I was literally there when you tried to merge Limbo with Earth.* The sentient mailboxes, the flesh-eating elevators, the castle of souls... I remember.

You were *insane* with grief and anger and fear...

*Come on pals, we don't haveta tell you she's talking about 1989's crossover event *Inferno*, right? --S.B.

...so much so that you left an *imprint*.

I've studied that imprint. I studied the *you* left here.

While those experiences, that mindset, are still a part of you, they're not all of who you are. But they *are* important.

I don't need your pity, *child*.

Having *survived* doesn't earn you pity here. It earns you *respect*.

This place... To control it requires one to have been touched by anger and grief, and to have come out the other end. I see what has been done to you, and I *know*.

Besides, I'm not dumb. This transference of power comes with a *binding contract*.

We *both* have to agree to the terms.

Hm. Clever...and fair.

I suppose this comes from experience too.

Hell's all about the *small print*, Mads.

I learned as a child that any agreement here has to be airtight.

Indeed... Deals made in Limbo are full of *trickery.*

I don't have any interest in back-stabbing you.

I want to be *free.*

I don't claim to know everything about you, but it seems like we have a lot in common.

I need to know that I can *trust* whoever rules in Limbo.

All of *my terms* are laid out in red and white.

What do *you* want?

There had been others who had fallen...

...a Wind Walker who was like a mother. another Shadow who was her closest friend. a titan of steel who was her brother...

...but the Little Goblin could not let herself remember them now-- not if she was to be free.

There, you have my terms. Let's be--

We still think this is a huge mistake.

You promised to let us speak, Magik.

And you can.

But before you do, trust me when I say that I *thought through* my terms. No one is in danger.

So speak. But "I don't like it" isn't anything but a waste of time.

You said that you need to be able to trust who you put on the throne.

Yet, right before that, you talked about how Madelyne tried to wrest control of Limbo to bring Hell to Earth. And more recently, she literally died threatening to destroy Krakoa.

What makes you think she's changed?

You think that I'm smart enough to rule Limbo, but not smart enough to know what is best for it?

That isn't what I mean, and you know it.

You either trust me or you don't. You either think I'm a fool or you acknowledge that I know what I am doing.

You're being obstinate, dammit!

Why is it important to you that I stay permanently bound to the place that ruined my life?

The place that took *everything* from me?

We don't want that--I don't want that for you, 'Yana.

But making *her* ruler here is dangerous. For you, for Krakoa--hell, for the whole world.

"She" is right here.

Speaking around me as if I'm a *thing* reflects poorly on *you.*

Fair. Sorry.

Dani's right. Madelyne, the last time you got it into your head that you would venture into Limbo, ya kidnapped infants from their parents and tried to use them as conduits.

You were willing to kill *your own son* to exact revenge.

The *council* resurrected me. I've been given a *clean slate.*

Madelyne--

No.

If the *monster* who *made* me can sit *on* your council, why can't I come into my own power? *Hmm?*

Why is Krakoa's promise not for *me?*

And what protection will *Krakoa* have against Limbo if you decide *you* want to wipe us off the map?

KRASH!

What protection does Krakoa have against Limbo?

Absolutely *none!*

Round 'em up!

Many of the obstacles the Companions encountered were as unexpected as they were treacherous.

Hopelessness, desperation, and anger bubbled to the surface, seeming to consume their spirits. The harder they struggled, the more they seemed to succumb.

But the Little Goblin knew they had to press on...

Are you *serious* right now?!

You're all grounded!

THUNK

Filthy. Disgusting.

Away with you, demons!

Rahne, behind you!

SPLOSH!

We can't let them kill us.

Resurrection may be *warped* here, like in Otherworld!

Dani!!!

TOC

Ugh!

Time to make some mutant jelly.

Hrk!

I'll put it on your tab.

Hmph.

S'ym!

You dare?!

YEAAAARRGHHH!

Heard there was a job opening.

Consider this my application.

You can call me Boss.

You're *dog meat*, #@@%&!

WHANG!

Ooof!

N-no...

%&#@!

Illyana!

I did not sign on for this!

Grrrr!

Get up! You have to get up!

+Hisssss!+

We have to *go!*

Open a ***stepping disk*** back to Krakoa!

Wh-wha?

Now!

Sooner rather than later would be good.

I...
I...

Back off, big boy.

Get back!

I got you. It's okay, I got you.

It--it's gone.

My *Soulsword*... my power over Limbo...

We need to tell the council. We need to gather for war!

Um, about that...

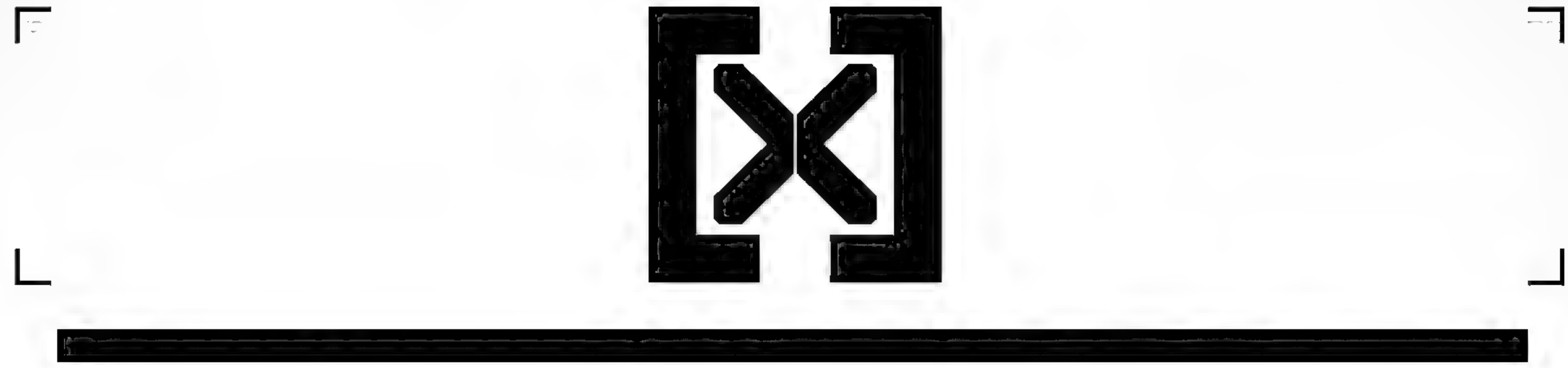
Limbo.

Still.

...it looks like we're still in Oz...

Sometimes when it seems as if all hope is lost, that is when things become most clear.

All the possibilities and paths lay in front of the Little Goblin, and it was up to her to choose...



"Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill."
--*Macbeth*, Shakespeare

Castle Belasco, Limbo. Then.

Deep in the bowels of the infernal castle of Limbo's fiendish ruler sits a child. Her name is Illyana Rasputina, unwilling ward of Belasco, the master of the castle.

The library is her sanctuary in this hostile keep, the place where she goes to be alone. Though she knows, even here, she is watched...

"No matter how fast or far she ran, the shadow kept pace, whispering terrible things in her ear."

She had thought she knew the contents of the library the way one knows an old, dear friend.

But today, she has discovered something new...

"After a long while, the little goblin realized that to escape, she would need help."

...Something that feels like it is just hers.

TOK TOK TOK

Little Sssssnowflake...

The sound of approaching boots and a magically twisted mouth hissing her nickname set little Illyana's heart racing in her chest.

She knows her excursions into the library are tolerated because Belasco thinks it makes her more malleable to his manipulations, but something inside her knows that if she is caught with *this* book, she will never be allowed to set foot among the stacks again.

One of the first spells she taught herself was a small enchantment of *hiding.*

Nothing that would be noticed by a man as convinced of his own importance and power as Belasco, but just enough to carve out a space all her own.

For a moment, she considers crawling in and pulling it closed behind her, but doesn't.

It would be too bold a defiance, and she knows that the inch she has managed to take for herself can easily be taken away.

You know better than to hide, girl.

Illyana can hear the strain in Cat's voice, the difficulty of forcing human words through her magically transformed throat.

It makes her ache for the woman she knew, her protector and best friend, and hate the thing she became because of *her*.

I--I was *not* hiding--

The ssstink of your lies amuses me.

The Master waitsss.

Dally at your own peril, girl.

A deep, familiar dread drops heavy into little Illyana's stomach.

She desperately wants to refuse the call and run, but she knows better than to disobey.

Her brother, tortured and killed by Belasco's evil henchman S'ym. Her friends Storm, Kitty Pryde, and Nightcrawler all twisted and changed by Belasco's magic.

Illyana watched as one by one, the X-Men were killed or corrupted by the evil of Limbo.

In the end, the choice was to become his apprentice and a pawn in his game of domination, or lose herself completely.

No child should have to make such a choice, but deep inside her, oft covered over by fear, beat something even stronger...

Hope.

Hope that she could somehow, someway, undo all of the pain and suffering she has witnessed.

That she could learn how to turn back time and--armed with the knowledge of the library and of things to come--*change Fate.*

But to do that, she had to be patient.

She had to pretend to be the fool in Belasco's play.

But then, Illyana had always had a knack for *adaptation.*

It’s What We Do

Limbo.

Mmm

Come on, *manifest* you stupid--

There's *something* this way...

SNIF SNIF

Finally...

Damn.

It's okay, Illyana.

After what happened at the castle, it makes sense that you're having trouble manifesting--

I'm *not* having trouble manifesting, Dani.

S'ym ***shattered*** my Soulsword somehow. It may be why my teleportation is off.

The sooner I can figure out how to ***pull it together,*** the sooner we can get back to Krakoa and rally to sort out the mess in Limbo.

Ow.

HUMPH!

#@$%!

What we ***need*** to do is find a safe place to ***rest.***

You may not be bleeding, but what happened was devastating. You can't just expect to immediately bounce back.

I don't have the luxury of taking a knee--we could be in for all-out ***war.***

There, the sounds of ***battle.*** Whatever is happening, it isn't good...

Over here!

Long ago, the Goblin Exile lost a great battle against the Demon Usurper. She and her few companions were forced to flee into the shadows of the kingdom she once ruled. One by one, the small band of rebels were hunted down by the horde of Demons, until only the Goblin Exile remained.

Then, something both new and ancient found its way into the forsaken land--an ***infection*** that twisted the Demons into a mechanical hive, intent on consuming everything living in its path.

The Goblin Exile's powers somehow kept the hive trapped in the kingdom.

Now, at the edge of things in a cold, desolate outpost, the Goblin Exile holds the line.

I think those are demons down there.

What an ***astute*** observation. We're in Limbo, of course they're demons.

Maybe, but there's something ***wrong*** with them. I can't tell what from here.

All the more reason to avoid this place. We're not ready to take them on right now.

We can't leave whoever's down there to face them alone.

We're already on the back foot, and there're a lot of them. What we need to do is tactically ***retreat.***

I'm loath to involve myself in your squabble, but...Magik is right. We're outnumbered.

Any enemy of the demons is an ally, and they clearly need help.

Looks like the decision has been made for us.

You should keep a closer eye on your ***pet.***

SNIFF

It's YOU...

...it's Illyana!

Don't you wretches get tired of smashing up against my walls?

Rush her, quick, before she can--

Hold on, we're coming!

Sigh.

You never learn.

Aaahhh!!!

Uhhhh...

!

What...in the hell was *that?*

A *lot* of power.

Dear god...

I'm impressed.

How long until the demons come back?

Your guess is as good as mine.

Did ye see the circuits? I think they're infected with the *technovirus.*

Let's have this discussion somewhere a little less out in the open.

?!

Hullo, me! No need to *knock.*

We have some time.

It usually takes them about three weeks to gather the forces to make another siege attempt.

That door's a decoy. Come around the side, I'll give you the tour.

After my sword shattered, I lost the ability to teleport out of Limbo and became trapped here.

I never regained the strength to take control of Limbo back from S'ym.

Dani, Rahne, and Madelyne--*my* versions--they... Dani and Rahne went together in an attack in the first years, and Madelyne in an arcane accident a year later.

I'm not sure how the techno-organic virus made its way to Hell, but it's ***everywhere,*** and Warlock can't absorb it. Still, we've been holding back the infected horde for... too many years to count.

They have a stronghold that I've attempted to breach multiple times. I think if I kill their ***leader,*** they'll scatter.

From what I've been able to gather, the human world is a mess. Krakoa fell. That I know for sure.

Warlock and I are the only mutant survivors, as far as I know.

The spell we use to destroy the demons takes a lot out of Warlock and myself. I'm exhausted.

We can talk more in the morning. Make yourselves at home.

WARLOCK LOG 337,402

Subjects of observation: *Illyana Rasputin [Magik]; Madelyne Pryor [Goblin Queen]*
Location: *Barracks Beta-5*

MAGIK: There's like twenty different barracks, and I'm looking for alone time if you don't mind.

MADELYNE: You act as if I care. [Pause] Why me?

MAGIK: [Sigh] Because when you shake us both, you can hear the broken glass in there--that's what it takes to rule over this place. A PURE and STABLE person can't run hell; between literal demons trying to usurp the throne, the politics between all the factions and the literal warping STUFF this plane is made of, they wouldn't last a day. Plus, you have to be sharp enough to CUT.

MADELYNE: Madness and evil are the qualifications, then?

MAGIK: We've seen the darkness and survived. We aren't untouched by it, and we recognize it when it comes knocking again. If you want to call that crazy, that's up to you, but I prefer TUNED-IN to the TRUTH.

MADELYNE: There are very few mutants who are UNTOUCHED. That still doesn't explain why ME.

MAGIK: [Long pause] I wasn't lying when I said I've studied what you left behind. The IMPRESSION of you, it lives here forever. There are versions that I've even had to dissipate, they've been so strong. You're connected to this place, but not like I am. [Long pause] This place is where I lost my innocence; parts of it were ripped away from me, and parts I bargained away to survive long enough to free myself from Belasco. It TOOK from me. But this is the place YOU came to in order to break FREE from the powers controlling you.

MADELYNE: And how do you know I won't use this place to take more from you--how do you know that I won't use it to make everyone who ever slighted me PAY?

MAGIK: Sounds like you are more worried about that than I am. But to be fair, it's in the contract that you can't.

MADELYNE: Do you think that can stop me?

MAGIK: A binding arcane contract freely agreed upon keeps you to the absolute letter of the bargain. But, even without it... [Pause] You were right, back in the castle. There hasn't been a moment of your life when you've been able to make a choice about who you are. Sinister, Cyclops, Havok...you exist in an orbit that resentfully circles them. It disgusts me.

MADELYE: I don't need your pity.

MAGIK: I don't pity you--I WAS you. Belasco, S'ym, even a version of Kate and Kurt--what happened here cut me up into pieces that I've had to fit back together. But I was allowed to do that, long before Krakoa. If a worm like Nathaniel Essex gets a seat at the table, you deserve that and more, even if it can't be in the same house.

MADELYNE: [Long pause] How is you handing this to me any different than the Council resurrecting me at the whim of Alex Summers?

MAGIK: I'm offering you more than a one-time choice. I'm offering you the chance to make INFINITE ones after that--out of the shadows of the men who the world thinks define you. [Laughs] Also to deal with the consequences you rightfully earn. [Long pause] This place is my prison, even now that I run it. I think we both deserve to find out who we are without the sword of what was done to us dangling over our heads.

End of exchange.

—

I hope I remember how I--*you*--used to take it.

Thanks.

Don't mention it.

CHUG CHUG CHUG

Heh.

Why do you do this? Why stay here and fight?

'Cus it's what we do.

Well said.

No need to raise arms.

I come under a banner of truce, to have words.

I've been authorized to make you an offer, young one.

Safe passage back to Earth for you and your companions.

In return, you leave behind this old hag and her malfunctioning arm.

HA HA HA HA

Yeah, about that...

Get bent. We don't sell out our own.

You owe her no loyalty.

She's a cautionary tale for you. This is a chance for you to change your Fate.

Your desperation is really showing.

Aaa--

You should consider carefully, young one. The next time we come, her parlor tricks will not be enough.

She weakens by the day. Ask her how much longer she can keep doing this.

We need to talk, all of us.

Now.

What did he mean-- how much longer *can* you do this? Are you dying or something?

I'm not dying. But things are *complicated.*

How so?

What you saw when you came over that ridge was a ***spell*** that I cooked up a long time ago.

Seems like the only thing that puts them down for good, but there're always more that come.

"The demons are vulnerable to Warlock's essence, so I crafted the spell around that.

"But every time we cast it...it ***takes*** something from us."

When Warlock first arrived here from Krakoa, he was injured but mostly okay.

Now he can't even hold his original shape anymore.

Why are you doing this? And don't just say, "It's what we do."

But I did tell you-- ***I'm the only one left.***

I believe if I ***kill*** the ***leader*** of the techno-organic demons, the powers of Limbo will revert to me...

"...and I'll be able to destroy the virus once and for all, and get back to Earth."

What else have you tried besides letting them attack you and slowly killing yourself to kill them?

"I've tried a lot."

This is the only thing that seems to make a dent in their numbers.

The Sextant, Krakoa.

"I've tried assaulting their castle, for all the good it's done me. Lost me my arm.

Excuse me for intruding.

"I've tried to get back to Earth through every arcane avenue I know. It only ends with us back here and weakened."

I'm looking for my sister. She and I have to talk.

I haven't seen Magik since yesterday, but I am happy to take a message.

Eh, that is all right...

Sorry, haven't seen her.

"So, in classic ***me*** fashion, you decided that casting the same spell over and over again as it slowly whittled away at you and Warlock was a ***better*** option.

"Or--you've actually ***given up*** and are just trying to take as many with you as you can.

"Either way? You've been thinking too ***small.***

"You've got to go bigger.

Sorry, Piotr, haven't seen her today.

"Don't worry. I've got an idea."

They were not kidding when they said they were coming in force.

Quantity over quality.

Once again, I come to you under a banner of truce.

Last chance to change your mind, young one.

Think of your friends.

I have a counter-offer. A one-on-one fight between myself and your leader, winner takes all.

Don't be ridiculous--

You got yourself a deal.

?!

Good.

Last time I saw you, you were-- well, as pathetic as that one over there. You were so small and so young! Crying about your little sword. I see you got a new one though.

Mine's bigger.

Charming.

Easy, easy.

S'ym, you %#&@ #%%# #@%!

Remember, this was your plan.

One on one. No interference from either side. Neither of us uses *magic*.

That doesn't seem very fair to you.

You might as well just give up now.

Just worry about yourself.

Make your move, little brat.

You'd think being cyberjunk would improve your halitosis, and yet...

Rrrr...

Haaaaaah!

Hrk!

You wriggled and squirmed like a worm all these years in the dark, when you *knew* this would be how it ended.

÷Gurgle÷

Pathetic.

I *said* to worry about *yourself.*

Wha--?

All this time I've been fighting you from the outside. And that's why I failed.

But what better way to defeat your enemy than from the *inside?*

I just needed a fresh pair of eyes to show me the way.

This is a long time coming.

Goodbye.

He's dead! Everyone for themselves!
I'm melting! Aaahhh!
Whatever she did to him, it's spreading to us!
Kill them all!
Not likely.
Stay back-to-back.
Grrr!
Yargh!
You good?
Been worse.
Is that--?
What's left of him.
Still warm.
Do you mind if I...?
Take it.
It's yours anyway.
Maybe this will help with my little problem.
Oh yeah.
Let's do this.

After hearing of the Goblin Exile's journey, the Little Goblin saw the strength and determination that she thought had been lost in herself.

The Exile may have swung the killing blow on the leader of the demon horde, but it was the Little Goblin who gained a boon: hope.

MAGIK'S OUTPOST JOURNAL, ENTRY 52

Days have all been the same since coming to this installation, and it's been...a long time since I bothered to write anything down. But there's no better reason to take up the pen than what's happened.

S'ym (and his techno-virus infected horde) are dead.

The missing piece was the connection--spreading Warlock's energy through the virus' system itself, from the inside. Attack the virus itself, instead of the bodies infected by it. Worked like a charm, burning through their code like wildfire.

I didn't know I had it in me, even back then, to figure out such an elegant solution. I should have given myself more credit...maybe it wouldn't have gotten to where it did if I had.

The smoldering core of S'ym smelled like charred victory. It was only right the kid get to keep it.

She managed to manifest a sword again, if only long enough to slice through the dying, panicking bastards, but we both knew it wouldn't hold long. There's something still severed in her, like there is in me, and until she mends that, she won't be able to access what she needs.

Still, I know eventually the kid'll get it sorted.

When she first got here, she was zoned out, like she didn't even know where to start pulling herself together--I remember that well. There was something in her expression when we talked about what I had been through here though...something like a suddenly remembered truth. No matter what happens to us, we take it and use it to survive.

She's already doing a million times better than I did.

They offered to take me with them, but to be honest, I have no idea where that wobbly-looking stepping disk would lead. We may have won the day, but the kid's confidence is still shattered, and I don't really like the idea of stepping into something worse than where I came from.

Besides, it wasn't right. I have my own mending to do. And Warlock and I have to find out what happened to Krakoa, to our family.

We won't know any peace until we do.

—

The darkened halls of Belasco's citadel are no place for a child to grow up, but Illyana Rasputin is not given a choice. A prisoner as much as an apprentice, the girl finds herself persecuted at every turn.

Worse, the claw and teeth that nip at her heels belong to one who was once her best friend, the transformed Cat.

+Hisssss+ Ssstop this nonsense!

Make me stop!

You'll regret this!

But after so long learning at Belasco's own knee, Illyana is not without her *tricks*...

Yargh!

...and *plans*.

When I get my hands on you...you'll rue the day...

Not if *this* works...

ᛗᚦᚠᛒᛜ ᚺᛈᚲᚱᛒᚴᚠᛜ ᛗᛜᛇᚢᛉᛜᛗ!

+Hisssss!+ Whaaat is happpeninggg to meeee--?

--Illyana? Is that you?

Where am I? What's happening?

I'm so sorry. This is all my fault.

Kitty?

The change lasts for only a moment, but in those precious seconds, Illyana sees her friend once again.

It is bittersweet, stinging her heart even as it strengthens her resolve.

One way or another, Illyana would find a way to break Belasco's hold on her friend.

Worry about yourssssself! Little brat!

Aaahhh!

One way or another, Cat would be *free.*

Kitty!!!

I'll do everything in my power to save you.

Begin at the Beginning

Castle Belasco, Limbo, then.

Contrary to what one might believe, even the denizens of Belasco's Keep respect the Witching Hour.

All but one, who uses the deepest darkness for her own *works*...

Illyana Rasputina, child sorceress and prisoner-apprentice of Belasco himself, has learned much in these quiet hours in the palace.

Her young mind is like a sponge, and arcane knowledge the water it absorbs. By now, she would be a formidable match for many an accomplished Earth magician.

But compared to her master, she is a fumbling babe still.

But lately, she has had *inspiration* in her learning.

Something to give her *hope* that she will one day be truly free from the iron hold the fiend has on her body and soul.

I went on an adventure today, and I wrote it down!

It has knights, and swords, and an evil Red King, and even magic!

Would you like to hear?

Oh, I knew you would, big brother!

And I just know you'll love it!

The remains of *Piotr Rasputin,* strong man of the X-Men, beloved brother of Illyana.

When she was first captured in Limbo, the X-Men made a valiant attempt at rescue. It was during this that Piotr was captured by S'ym, one of Belasco's generals.

Once known as Colossus, he was a towering figure made of glimmering steel. But after S'ym was through, he was reduced to a lifeless husk.

But even still...

"The Little Goblin and the Mad Hatter did not expect to find themselves face-to-face with..."

"...the spell they cast was a funny one. It sent who the casters *believed* they *needed.*"

...big brother is synonymous with *hero.*

Rahne, Madelyne, *run!*

I'll hold them as long as I can!

Wait, where's Illyana? I cann-- *arck!*

GURGLE!

Unhand me, you filthy-- *ugh!*

That's enough outta *you,* little lady.

wake up

The Red King'll be pleased to have you as his *guests.*

I said, *wake up!!!*

+Gasp!+

Are you all right?

Holy &@%#, you're--

My name's Illyana. You look like me!

Whoa... Dani, are you seeing this?

If you're looking for your friends...

...they're gone. They were *taken.*

#@+%.

This was the biggest spell I've ever tried. I was trying to escape from Limbo, to go back to the *real world.* But I muddled it up somehow, and instead, the magic *reshaped* this one.

No one remembers who they were before, but even though they are *different,* they're still the same. I made the Red King very angry...

It's almost time for the Tea Party, you see. Your friends were taken by the Red King's guard... and it's all *my fault.*

Why don't I remember this happening? There is *something* tickling at my mind, but when I try to recall, it disappears like a shadow.

It couldn't be your fault, kiddo.

They're really after *me,* but the mushroom forest helps me *hide.*

I swear, I will help you get them back!

I won't let the Red King hurt them!

What this Red King does, it's not on you. He's a bad person, and he was already like that long before you.

What you're doing--using magic to find a way out--when I was very little, there was a bad man who kept me prisoner, and that's how I escaped.

Magic isn't inherently good or evil, kid. It's just *energy* and *will.* The *intention* of the wielder is what determines that.

You will make mistakes--we *all* do--but as long as you commit to making things right, you'll be okay.

Do you really mean it?

Yeah, kid. Of course. Trust me, I know you.

And you'll help me with this?

Sure...

Okay, I have an idea! Another spell I found in the library...

Wait, hold on a second--

You *said* you'd help and I could fix it!

Yeah, right, but I don't know the spell. And I'm not exactly prepared for world-bending magic right now.

I trust you.

Ah ha ha... right...

#@+%.

To Summon A Savior

Intentions:

--Bring one who you believe can save you to you

Tools:

--Intentions

--Two drops of blood (payment)

--Salt (for cleansing)

--Teleportation runes (not necessary with disks)

--[illegible]

--[illegible]

--[illegible]

The Red King's Keep.

I hope you're finding your accommodations to your liking.

What did you do with Magik, you sonova #@+%&?!

...

+Groan...+

Charming. Not to worry, your current *rooms* are temporary.

The Tea Party shall begin soon enough, and all of you are guests of honor!

%#+@!

You'll change your attitude when the time comes-- participation and a sunny disposition are *compulsory.*

That's code for "we're going to get eaten by a monster," you know that, right?

+Sigh+

Not again.

Ugh!

"Wake me up when they start serving hors d'oeuvres."

Krakoa.

?

KRAKLE

!

сладкий милосердный-!!!

PHYOOM

EUTHYPHRO

DANI: I don't think that Sinister being on the council is a good thing, for the record.

MADELYNE: Excuse me?

DANI: You said how could we be distrustful of you while the monster who made you sits on our governing council. Well, I don't like that either.

MADELYNE: Great. So glad to clear that up. Now I'm ***trying*** to sleep before the inevitable knock-down, drag-out battle with these demons, if you don't mind.

RAHNE: Apologies. It's just that we've been stuck in this Limbo cycle, and we've seen... changes in you. We believe in second chances, but...

MADELYNE: But not for ***me***, right? Apocalypse, and Magneto, and even Wanda the Pretender, but not for me. Tell ***me,*** what makes me so irredeemable?

DANI: Look, you aren't responsible for what was done to you, but that doesn't give you the right to victimize other people. I'll give you that during your attempt to bring Limbo to Earth you could very well have been driven mad and not had control, but that isn't the case every time, and yet you have chosen to hurt and kill time and again!

RAHNE: There are...holes in how things work, but the hope is that everything functions out of a desire for community, safety, and justice.

MADELYNE: ***Justice?*** And what exactly is justice to you, hmm? Please, explain to me how what has happened to me is just?

DANI: It isn't. But what you have done isn't just, either. And to be given the power of essentially a hell dimension when you refuse to take responsibility for the horrible things you have done of your own free will... I believe that having Sinister on the council is a huge mistake, but he doesn't have sole say or power. You would, and you have had no problem maiming, kidnapping, and killing to get what you want without that.

RAHNE: Every single person who's done wrong needs to make personal amends and commit to not just obeying the Laws, but internalizing the promise of Krakoa. Otherwise, it won't work.

MADELYNE: So what, would I be more palatable if I was more ***pious*** to the new gods of Krakoa? If I made burnt offerings at Xavier's altar, and fought, maimed, and killed in his name instead of my own? Your justice makes megalomaniac lunatics kings, I want no part of it.

The Little Goblin and the Mad Hatter did not expect to find themselves face-to-face with the tall Steel Knight, but the spell they cast was a funny one. It sent who the casters *believed* they *needed*.

The Knight, the Little Goblin felt in her heart of hearts, was the greatest hero in all the land--a dragon slayer. He was everything she wished she could be.

The Mad Hatter was less enthusiastic. Though she would not say, the Little Goblin could tell that there was a history of pain between the two adults.

Gently , the Little Goblin took the Mad Hatter aside and smiled her best smile. "Don't be jealous," she said, voice full of conviction. "You can do anything! Just look, *you* brought *him* here!"

The road they traveled was not long, but it was treacherous. The entire journey, neither adult spoke to the other, though they glanced at each other often, playing a game of cat and mouse with their gazes.

The Mad Hatter's expression was one of hurt and danger, the Steel Knight's one of deep sorrow and regret.

Welcome.

You're expected.

W-we're going right toward him!

Sshh, shh. Do not worry, little one.

Sometimes, the best way to overcome a problem is to let your adversary believe you are playing into their hands. They will often underestimate you.

Did you ***seriously*** just walk into what is clearly a trap?

Maybe your friends are right to be worried about your judgment.

Ah, I see you have walked right into my clutches.

As troublesome as the girl has been, I knew if--

Always the monologuing, it *never* fails.

Big brother?

Wait here, sweet one. This will be over quickly.

I had no idea how much power truly lay inside of such a small vessel--it goes beyond my wildest hopes!

My original thought was to kill your friends in front of you, but I think there is too much potential here.

It is perhaps best that I keep them and conduct some *experiments* with them...

As predictable as you are repugnant.

Like a bad children's book character.

Yada yada yada, she's right. There is a reason why you aren't in charge anymore. None of you are original.

Now let's cut the bull-- *ah,* the b.s. and get to it.

No, Colossus has to do it. He's the hero we got from the spell-- he'll save them!

...

I... is it all right if I help?

Illyana...

Scoff Well? Get to it, *hero.*

It's *fine.*

You take the dummy in red, and I'll free our friends.

Haaa!

You will *pay*, defiler of children!

Genuinely shocked at how quickly this little tangent has seemed to resolve itself.

Freedom now, sarcasm later.

I'm being sincere.

Oh. Well, you're welcome, I guess? He kind of made it easy.

It helps that he couldn't possibly understand that you bested him as a child, so he stands no chance against you now.

I do love watching men fall prey to their own hubris, yes.

!!

Highness, uh--

Come back, you cowards!

We do *not* get paid enough to deal with this!

We don't get paid at all!

Exactly!

GRAAAARR!

POW

Ugh!

Spare me! I don't even need a flesh-and-blood arm to deal with you!

I've gifted many like you to my servants as playthings, tin man, and when they were done, there were only husks left to be witness.

Her, however...

!

...she's special.

You've led me on a merry chase, little one. If I didn't know better, I'd think you didn't like my company?

But surely *that* isn't true, is it?

N-no, please, I--

Next time, try not to get captured like you're a Fairy-tale Princess, *huh?*

Says the one who was sleeping in a thicket of mushrooms like she was waiting for True Love's Kiss.

Snort

Aiiieeeee!

#@%!

Go, Madelyne will finish freeing me and I'll follow!

I'd be lying if I said I'm not going to enjoy the chance to do *this* again.

Hmm, oh, this is interesting.

Your energy is ***potent***, but ***diffused*** somehow. Like light fractured through a frosted prism.

So unsure that your energy is ***leaking out***, even as you try and focus it.

Pity, I have no ***use*** for someone so ***fractured.***

A cracked cup might not be useful for water, but it can hold a million other things just fine.

The light from a frosted prism can ***distract*** as well as any other.

Gotcha!

Perhaps. But the distraction is ***momentary***, barely worth remembering.

I'll ***make you*** remember.

Maybe. But if I shatter that silly prism, then--

Wha--?

The jagged edges of broken glass can be used to cut.

I'll show you how ***sharp*** my edges are, you piece of $#@%!

Though he wears a different face, the Mad Hatter knows her greatest enemy anywhere.

As she raises the Vorpal Blade high, how she wishes that she could destroy him here and now. But she knows that isn't her burden to bear, and that if she were to strike a killing blow, she would irreparably harm all that is to come.

With a look of grim determination on her face, half hidden by the brim of her hat, the Mad Hatter steels herself.

She does what she can here, using her sword to cleave the spell and memories from the fiend's mind.

Hopefully, she will be able to create a subtle crack in his defenses, which the Little Goblin can use to finally defeat him when the time comes...

How's your head?

That spell was ***strong***...I never realized how much power I had back then.

!

?

Incredible.

Hmph, ***fine.***

You ***did it!*** You broke the spell!

What exactly is happening here?

We'll get you up to speed later, but the long and short of it is that Magik's Soulsword shattered and we've been unsuccessfully trying to escape Limbo since.

Looks like you've somehow been sucked into our little adventure.

I told you I'd help you, didn't I?

We can't stay here. There's no telling what our presence here will do to our timeline.

As much as it pains me to agree, Madelyne's right.

Illyana!

Piotr!

My little snowflake.

I missed you so much, big brother!

I missed you too, little one.

I wish that I could be with you and keep you safe always.

Haha, but, Piotr--

--you *are.*

And *you do.*

Я так люблю тебя, маленькая снежинка.

и что бы ни случилось, я всегда буду.

+Giggle+

WACK!

Before you go, I have something for you.

Oh, *uh,* no need--

I insist! Please?

Heh. Okay, kiddo.

I tried and I tried, but I could never get an acorn to work.* But this is something I made.

It is not enough to leave, but it gives me hope I will one day.

*She's talking about the acorn from 1983's *Magik: Storm and Illyana #3!* --S.B.

I can't take this from you, Illyana. You need that hope.

You're not taking anything--I'm giving this to you.

Besides, it is *yours too* anyway.

I know who you are. I figured it out!

And I meant what I said.

We're taking her with us.

You're the one who told us we can't do that.

I don't care what I said. I can't leave her here. I can't do this to her--*to me*--again.

You can do anything.

No.

I'm not going anywhere.

You don't *understand.*

You don't know what's *waiting for you* if you stay.

I don't want you to become me.

You got strong enough to get free. So I know I will!

You know what happens if you break the rules. You can't take me.

But that's all right.

You've *already* saved us, as you will again.

And I would be proud to become you.

I feel the fear and unfinished business in your heart. You know where you need to go and you know what you need to do.

I believe in you. Now *go.*

Where have you been, little one? I've been looking for you all night.

...

I've been right here.

Castle Belasco, the darkest hours...

"Hopefully, she will be able to create a subtle crack in his defenses, which the Little Goblin can use to finally defeat him when the time comes..."

"After she cut through the spell, the Mad Hatter's sword dissipated."

"She hadn't found the *answer* yet. But that's okay. She will."

...inside the library sanctuary of the one who would one day become queen of this place.

No one else remembers but me, and even now it is fading, so I had to write it down.

Though for now, she remains a prisoner.

I know you can't really hear or understand me, but I wanted to tell you what happened.

I wanted you to know that you are still my hero, keeping me safe...

The child knows that what she has done--raising a shade of the brother she loves so much--is wrong. Possibly an abomination.

But she could not help herself. She had to see him, to *tell him*, one last time.

I love you, big brother.

But now she knows what she must do.

It is time to put away childish notions...

...and start forging her future.

WHOOSH

The Queen Is Dead, Long Live the Queen

14

Limbo, an indeterminate amount of time since the New Mutants escaped the Red King.

It's been *weeks*, Illyana. This is getting tedious.

Time is different here, Mads--you *know* that. Weeks are hours, if not seconds.

Why is the *Soulsword* so important anyway? Is it what legitimizes your power here?

It's the *embodiment* of all the years of studying and building power and cohesion in myself that allowed me to finally *free* myself from Belasco.

It's a manifestation of *my soul.*

So what--without it, you can't fight?

Clearly not the case.

But it is a symbol--a living metaphor. I'm trying to repair what it *represents,* because I don't know if I can get us out of Limbo otherwise.

We've been working on your arcane education while we've been in hiding.

You should understand the connection between the center-self and how important it is to the manifestation of magic by now.

All I *know* is that we've been in this cave, hiding like mice, for long enough that I've gone nose-blind to the smell of *dog.*

Though I have to admit...I do appreciate the time you have taken to school me in magic.

You'll need all the tools in your toolbox at the ready.

And I'm happy to keep up lessons after we sort this mess out.

$#@%!

Appreciated.

But that means we'd actually have to *do something* instead of hiding for eternity.

Madelyne's right. I've been all for "hide and gather information," but if we're ever going to make it out of Limbo, we have to face S'ym and his army.

Our recon missions have shown us that there's some force behind S'ym's sudden increase in power. But how much more can we learn without breaching the castle?

See, we all agree--*time to storm the castle.*

That isn't at all what I'm saying, and you know it.

You don't want to hide like frightened mice, but you don't want to face the problem. What then, pray tell, is it that you are babbling about, Moonstar?

Neither of you understand the long game of Limbo, but...Madelyne's right.

Rushing in is the big plan?

We move in tonight. We finish what we started--we finish the ritual.

Then we give them hell.

Ah yes, the ritual--the one that'll give control of Limbo over to the *Goblin Queen.*

I know we've been through a lot together since we've been stuck here, but this still feels like a dangerous proposal.

Yes, maybe your contract will keep Krakoa safe in terms of attack, but...

Look, Madelyne, I believe you when you say that you want a place to call your own, but why ***help us*** if you lump us in with those who caused you harm?

You speak as if you know what I will do, but how could you?

I have always been my own person, yes, but not one without the infringement of others on me.

Until I woke up in that disgusting egg, my mind had never been without my maker's infernal finger-prints stamped across it.

Copy, broodmare, pawn in the games of ***his*** plans, and the plans of all the men who thought they had rights to me... ***No*** mind is unbreakable.

Krakoa's existence is partially due to the self-absorbed monster who made me. Why do you think ***he*** is more able to do what is "right"?

You may think I am rabid or insane, but how many of your beloved heroes haven't fallen just as low?

Why are you so resistant to the idea that, given the space, I would choose to ***rise*** to the occasion?

You're absolutely right I want this transfer to happen, as soon as possible. Krakoa represents to me what Limbo represents to Illyana.

But to ***me,*** Limbo represents a new beginning. A place where I can not only be myself, but be of ***use.***

Illyana said that it takes being touched by darkness to be able to survive here, let alone rule.

Here, nothing of my past will be held against me as it is on Krakoa.

So yes, I would help you, if only so that I could finally get my chance.

If there are no other questions that aren't a retread? Any concerns that aren't actually addressed?

I--no. No more questions...

Though this still feels dangerous.

Without a doubt. But that's what it is to be alive, right?

My word may not mean much to you, but having lived so long being hated and feared and having needed more than *just* a second or even third chance myself...

...the spirit of the promise that Krakoa stands for looks different for different people.

If Limbo is your second chance and you are willing to partake in a soul-sealing bargain to get it, then we must accept your word now.

I... thank you, Colossus.

Ready?

As anyone can be.

This begins with the contract, writ with blood...

...and ends with an exchange of life.

Blood is life, and we both give it freely now.

After the long, arduous journey through countless lands untold, the Little Goblin and her companions at last faced the Shadow...

...whatever happened next, she was resolute in her convictions: She was ready, the Shadow would not know what was coming, and she was not alone.

ROD REIS

Formerly Magik's castle, Limbo.

--sucks, like, who does he think he's talkin' to???

This is even worse than when *she* was in charge!

Wha--?

So... slee--

Zzzzzzz...

You should use your magic in combat more often...

I use it more often than you think, Moonstar--you just don't notice because I've been doing it since I first came back from Limbo.

What do you think the Soulsword *is?*

Well, I'm just thankful that we aren't going to have to battle our way to the throne room.

I think you spoke too soon, Wolfsbane.

Get the muties!

"Right on time.

"A full frontal attack, after stumbling around in the shadows for so long...

"'If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles.' -sigh-

"Almost a shame that they have been so predictable."

Don't let up, show *no mercy!*

Oh, I'm gonna enjoy the *hell* out of this...

Uh, you can end this any time now...!

Oh, I plan to.

Right now!

Are you ***seriously*** comin' at me with a regular sword?

Do you not remember last time?

I don't need my Soul-sword to put you in your place, you overgrown foot bunion.

ARGGH!

Gimme that!

You're just as dumb and weak as when you were a kid.

I'm gonna enjoy seeing *you* put in *your* place, little girl.

There is no universe in which you could beat me twice, S'ym. None.

Why do you assume I'm the worst you gotta deal with, girl? You know what they say about assumptions...

Ugh!

THUD

"If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat.

"If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle."

Illyana!

?!

Oh, I did *not* see *this* coming...

We have to move, *now!*

Colossus, Wolfsbane-- fastball special!

Madelyne, if you channel your power enough, can you separate the impostor from that weapon?

I can certainly give it my best shot.

"He who is prudent and lies in wait for an enemy who is not, will be victorious."

THE SECRET HISTORY OF QUEEN ILLYANA RASPUTINA

Illyana Nikolievna Rasputina is born. She is the youngest of three mutant siblings.

Illyana is kidnapped and brought to the United States by an enemy of the X-Men, and after being rescued, is allowed to stay in the country.

In Limbo, ***Illyana*** is rescued for a time and trains with alternate versions of ***Ororo Munroe,*** now an aged, powerful sorceress, and ***Kitty Pryde,*** now a deadly assassin, before being recaptured by ***Belasco.***

After training for years, ***Illyana*** uses her knowledge to manifest her Soulsword and defeat ***Belasco,*** dethroning and banishing him and ascending to ruler of Limbo.

Illyana spends a year rooting out any and all demons who would oppose her and bringing them to heel. She makes an example of ***S'ym,*** doing to him what he did to her brother.

When ***Magus*** attacks the New Mutants, ***Illyana*** allows them to take refuge in Limbo. ***Magus*** soon follows, and after a bloody, terrible battle, half the New Mutants are dead, along with ***Magus.***

Piotr Rasputin is recruited by ***Charles Xavier*** for his X-Men, leaving Illyana behind in Siberia.

Not long after, ***Illyana*** is abducted by the evil sorcerer ***Belasco*** and taken to Limbo.

Belasco takes ***Illyana*** on as his apprentice in the arcane arts, attempting to turn her into a pawn for his use -- but in secret, ***Illyana*** continues to train with ***Ororo,*** as well as studying all the texts in the palace's considerable library.

Illyana has a chance to return to Earth, but decides to stay in Limbo and "clean it up" -- she agrees to be an ally to the remaining X-Men.

Deciding to further her arcane knowledge, ***Illyana*** kidnaps ***Amora the Enchantress,*** from whom she learns how to manipulate the part of herself that was the demonic ***Darkchylde.*** She uses this knowledge to suck all the power from ***Darkchylde*** before destroying Amora.

In a bid for power, one of ***Illyana's*** advisors, the demon ***N'astirh,*** joins forces with ***Madelyne Pryor*** to attempt a coup of Limbo. Once again teaming with the New Mutants, ***Illyana*** manages to squash the uprising, though many

Let me guess.

You're the me who exists because I forgot to flush the toilet that one time.

Cute.

No, foolish girl.

I'm the you who actually took her rightful place on the throne of this realm, instead of playing at queen while simpering around Earth.

Although I suppose I should thank you. I was only able to fully stabilize into being because you have been neglecting your actual responsibilities.

Though, as I'm sure you suspect, in order for me to stay, I must ascend to the throne.

I'm shocked your little friends aren't more pleased-- I thought they wanted to keep Magik on the throne?

You could have just asked...

GROAN

You know the rules-- in order for me to ascend, there must be *blood.*

Which means *you* have to die...

Yeah, I don't think so!

"The quality of decision is like the well-timed swoop of a falcon...

"...which enables it to strike and destroy its victim."

Don't worry. This will be quick.

See, I can quote Sun Tzu too.

"Be extremely subtle even to the point of formlessness. Be extremely mysterious even to the point of soundlessness. Thereby you can be the director of the opponent's fate.

"The whole secret lies in confusing the enemy, so that he cannot fathom our real intent."

Gah!

What, no quote for the occasion?

Hurk!

Honestly, did you really think we spent all that time in the caves twiddling our thumbs?

I tried to tell you whoever was behind this would be myopic.

Hmm. Yes, well, thanks again for the lessons. I suppose I owe you a *token.*

I won't cash it in on anything frivolous.

Oh! Her--her *energy...*

...it feels...

...like *mine.* Like she stole something of me just by being here...but...

Heh.

...It's back now.

We knew you'd come out on top all along.

We kept the faith!

You're wasting your breath.

I'm not in charge around here anymore.

Now. One last bit of unfinished business...

H-hey, look, no hard feelings, you know how it is--

REPORT

SUBMITTED BY: **WAR CAPTAIN ILLYANA RASPUTIN/MAGIK**
SUBJECT: **LIMBO**

As of now, I'm not the ruler of Limbo anymore. I transferred power to Madelyne Pryor.

Madelyne is in charge there, but I will be checking in to help her with her magic training for a while. She's under a soul-binding agreement that she can never use her position or powers to willingly harm Krakoa or Krakoan citizens.

I assume you'll want to pull me in to explain my reasons in person, but let me just head off some questions at the pass:

-No, I wasn't possessed/mind-controlled/drunk when I turned over the keys to Limbo -- like Madelyne, I'm tired of being chained to the bad $#@% that happened to me, and I don't think any of you get a vote on that.

-My magic is still active, including my Soulsword.

-I can still use my teleportation disks, though I'm...not sure where I go between here and wherever I'm teleporting to -- it's all a big blank, but the process is instant.

I need to ~~experiment~~ experiment more with my disks, but they seem to work at least close to how they did before. I've taken people and objects through as tests, and everything seems fine.

Not sure what else to put into this report since you're definitely going to call me into a session to chew me a new one. I guess if this makes me less useful to you as a War Captain, that sucks, but so be it. I'll still be seeing to my duties with the kids.

Actually, in fact, that's another thing.

I think we need to formally train people here in magic. There's a million ways we've been de-powered, and knowing at least the ~~funementels~~ fundamentals of the arcane could make a huge difference in a crisis.

So I'll be starting that up, then.

-- Magik

—

The Akademos Habitat, Krakoa.

I understand why we have not truly spoken in so long, but...

...might you find it in your heart to try anyway?

Sure. You first.

I have been troubled lately. There are gaps in my memory. Missing time, coming to in strange places...*

It scares me.

*That's because he's being controlled by their brother Mikhail, as revealed in *X-Force (2019) #24!* --S.B.

I do not know what is happening, but I know that, despite all that has happened to me, the one constant in my life has been my love for you.

We have much to work through, but I owe it to you--who you were, and who you are now--to try my best to fix things between us.

I've spent so much of my life angry.

Angry at what was done to me. Angry at what *I* did to others because I couldn't control the darkness inside me...

Being angry is ***easy*** for me. Comfortable. But... what's beneath that is ***hurt.*** So much hurt.

I'm so ***tired*** of hurting.

You failed me. But I've failed too. And I want to be able to let the ugliness inside go.

What good is the promise of new beginnings if I can't have them with the people who have meant the most to me?

So... let's air out the wound, and start again?

There is nothing I wish for more, little snowflake.

Limbo.

First the wizard, then the child and her doppelganger, and now this redheaded pretender...

...we don't have to stand for this, my brethren! It is time for us to take back our power!

I say we--

FWOOSH

I hear you. You crave ***strong leadership.***

Unlike the last person to rule Limbo, I will be ***constantly*** available to you.

So.

With that in mind...

...are there any others who would like to air grievances?

NO?

Excellent.

LONG LIVE THE QUEEN!

LONG LIVE THE QUEEN!

LONG LIVE THE QUEEN!

Castle Belasco, Limbo.

Before the befores we have already seen.

S'ym, Belasco's thuggish stooge, has found another victim to visit his violence upon.

Young Illyana knows well the weight of such cruelties.

Please, *please,* have mercy!

Seeing them find a new victim only stokes the hate she has in her heart for the demon who killed her brother.

S'ym!

S'ym!

Yes *master.*

See ya around, maggot.

That should keep him busy long enough to forget about you.

Th-that was *you?* Incredible!

Just a little magic. S'ym is a bully, but he isn't very smart.

Thank youthank you*thankyou!* Furcas will never forget your kindness!

When you have need, Furcas will be there!

Oh, *um,* thank you...

"...I appreciate that."

--was this book that helped inspire me to fight back against Belasco. It was a storybook about a little goblin and her friends...

I haven't been able to find it since I was a kid, but I *know* it existed.

*This is behind the scenes of Cable and Magik's trip to Limbo in *Cable (2020) #9!* --S.B.

I help, you'll see, you'll see!

Limbo, between the thens and the now.

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Furcas has given you the knowledge and history-- now go, close the circle.

Help the young mistress find her freedom!

Yeehe hehe!

Limbo, then.

After the long, arduous journey through countless lands untold...

--strange magical signature...

+Gasp!+

Oh no, has he found my things?!

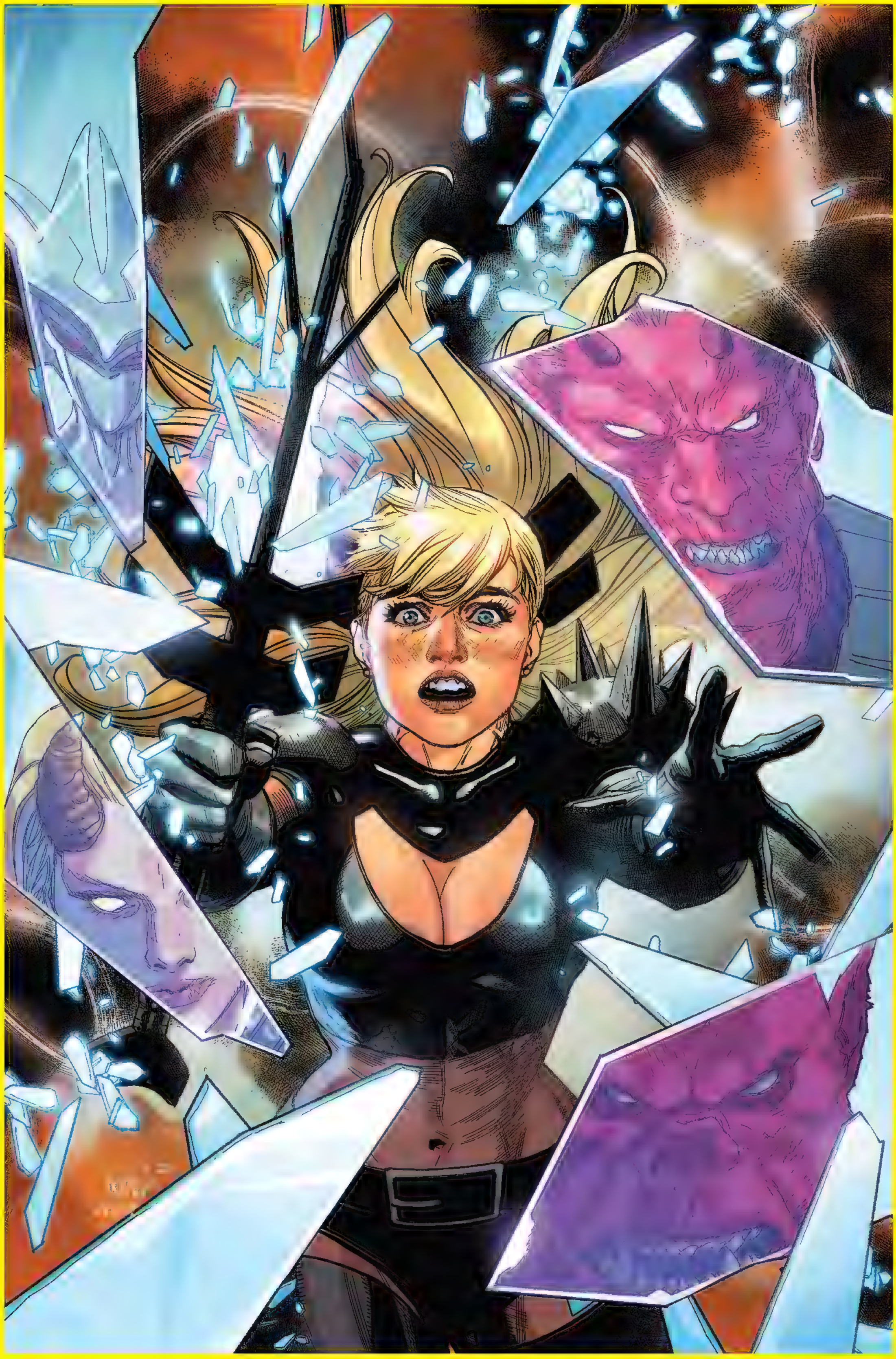
What... is this?

And so, one act of kindness from an imprisoned girl begets the seeds of her own liberation.

"Once upon a time, there was a Little Goblin..."

New Mutants #25

by Leinil Francis Yu
& Sunny Gho



New Mutants #26

by Leinil Francis Yu
& Romulo Fajardo Jr.

New Mutants #27

by Leinil Francis Yu
& Sunny Gho

New Mutants #28

by Leinil Francis Yu
& Sunny Gho

New Mutants #25 by Stanley “Artgerm” Lau

New Mutants #25 Variant by Dan Panosian

New Mutants #25 Promo Variant
by David Baldeón & Israel Silva

New Mutants #25 Variant
by Philip Tan & Sebastian Cheng

New Mutants #25 Variant

by Phil Jimenez
& Marte Gracia

New Mutants #26 Variant

by Carmen Carnero
& Alejandro Sánchez

New Mutants #26 Variant by Maria Wolf

New Mutants #27 Pride Variant by Betsy Cola

New Mutants #27 Hellfire Gala Variant

by Russell Dauterman
& Matthew Wilson

New Mutants #27 Variant

by Marcus To
& Erick Arciniega

The labors of Magik!

Illyana Rasputin is the Sorcerer Supreme and the rightful queen of Limbo — but she's been awfully busy on Krakoa. Someone's got their eye on Limbo's empty throne, and Magik isn't the only royalty in mutantdom! While Magik faces the demons of her past, present and future, Madelyne Pryor, the resurgent Goblin Queen, inches ever closer to Limbo's flaming throne! But as Magik spirals ever further into unfamiliar territory, will she drag her teammates Moonstar and Wolfsbane down with her?

Collecting:
New Mutants (2019) #25-28

By:
Vita Ayala, Rod Reis, Jan Duursema and Ruth Redmond.

MARVEL

T+